Tales of

Liverpool

Essay no 3

Letter of M,arqu

Dynasty

"If you could see your ancestors
all standing in a row
Would you be proud of them or not
Or don't you really know?"
Edith Littledale Fletcher

The Fletcher Family Dynasty of Allerton

Jacob Fletcher (Senior) --------Isabella Birch
1726-1808 1729-1779
Margaret Sturzaker
1731-1815

Joseph---------Caleb(Junior)---Elizabeth---David---Isabella---Anne---Eleanor---Sarah-------- Jacob (Junior)
1753-1812 1754 -1810 1770 -1844
m**arried 1785** **married**
Sarah Vernon **Ellen Lickbarrow**
1866 -1821

Jacob (Ellen ,mother)------Thomas-------Caleb-(Ellen mother)-------William (Ellen ,mother) -------Thomas2------ Elizabeth(Ellen, mother)
1790 - 1863 died infancy 1792 - 1870 1795-1871 died infancy 1799 -
marriage
Mary Benson

William ------- Mary--------Emily1-------Emily2------Henry------- Edward---------Alfred
1828 - 1922 1841- 1919
Edith
Littledale

William--------Edith--------Aubrey--------Edward--------Geoffrey--------Dorothy--------Bolton---------- Harold

William Alfred Littledale Fletcher	Mabel Fletcher	Littledale Fletcher	Lionel Fletcher	Littledale Fletcher	Noel Fletcher	Littledale Fletcher	Molnyeux Fletcher

Jacob Fletcher senior - Privateer (1726 – 1808

Fig 1 Jacob Fletcher senior. Courtesy Guy Fletcher

In a long line of Fletcher forebears, reaching back to the early years of 1400, Joseph Fletcher, a pipe-maker, was married in the 24th October, 1707, to Patience Scaife, having a daughter, Sarah, born the following year. On the 9th of October, 1713, at Bridekirk, Joseph married for the second time to Elizabeth Palmer – over the years, the couple had 5 sons and 2 daughters with Joseph dying on the 27th of January, 1769.The eldest born was Abraham (1714 – 1793), a self-taught mathematician and botanist, who wrote the acclaimed books The Universal Measurer (1752–53) and The Universal Measurer and Mechanic (1762). Abraham married Mary Peat in 1738 and went on to have 10 children - both died in the year of 1793--Abraham was on the 11 January and Mary the 9th of December.

The last born of Joseph and Elizabeth Palmer was Jacob (junior) (1726 – 1808) whose adventurous life was in direct contrast to Abraham's intellectual life.

On the 25th of May, 1851, Jacob married Isabella Birch 1729 - 1779, and went on to father 9 children: Joseph, Caleb, Elizabeth, David, Isabella, Anne, Eleanor, Sarah, and Jacob) (junior). Jacob's wife, Isabella, died on the 26th July, 1779, and on the 3rd of August, 1780, he married again, to a widow Margaret Mitchel nėe Sturzaker who died childless, on the 15th February,1815.

The very word "privateer" conjures up visions of buccaneering, sailors, thirsting to capture ships to take as "prizes" on behalf of King and Country- but Sir James Picton takes another view - *"The pursuits of the Liverpool Merchants during a great part of the eighteenth century, will not bear severe security in moral part of view.*
The practice of privateering could not but blunt the feelings of humanity of those engaged in it, combining, as it did the greed of the gambler with the ferocity of the pirate." However, Jacob, aged 29, on the way to begin a new life in 1745 in Liverpool, with family and nine merchant ships, would never have heard of Sir James Picton. However, the picture painted by Picton is not too far from the truth with one caveat - the privateers had to be issued with Letters of Marque, and from then onwards were legally sanctioned to attack ships at war with Great Britain. Although the government took a share of any ships or cargoes taken, privateering remained a lucrative undertaking, and Jacob Fletcher was among the very finest exponents of the trade, although his adventures sometimes led him into some hair-raising situations; purchasing the brig *Nelly* from John Jackson in 1862, ten years later, he scarcely managed to escape during the American Revolutionary War, when patriots burned his ship on the Savannah river, Georgia.
On another occasion, Jacob was more successful when commanding the *Catcher* in the month of November, 1778. The *Catcher*, carrying 14 guns and a crew of 80, was owned by Salisbury and Co, who must have been delighted when Jacob brought a French ship into the Mersey, carrying a cargo of 130,300 lbs of sugar, 115 barrels of coffee, 7 barrels of indigo, and 12 bales of cotton.

As far back as 1754, aged 28, Jacob was astute enough to be listed in the Jamaican Quit Rent books as the owner of 697 acres St Mary, 1100 acres in St Anne, and 74 acres in St-Thomas-in-the-Vale. *The Jamaican Quit Rent Books were the list of landholders in Jamaica with the acreage each person owned - slaves farmed the land, from where the vast amounts of sugar, coffee, cotton, were transported to Great Britain.*

Fig 2 St Thomas in the Vale wikipedia

As Jacob became too old for the rigours of the sea, he took the post of Tide Surveyor of the River Mersey. Jacob's home was 87 Duke street, where on 17 Jan, 1808, he died aged 81 leaving 3 of his sons to follow in his footsteps. He was buried in the now derelict St James' Church at the bottom end of Parliament street.

Jacob Fletcher (junior) (1770-1844)

Fig 3 Jacob Fletcher junior Courtesy Guy Fletcher

The 2nd to last born of Isabella's children followed in his father's footsteps and was also engaged in privateering. In 1794, sailing for Jamaica, in command of the *Elizabeth*, a ship owned in part by his father, and himself, was obliged to fight off the attentions of two French privateers near the Isle aux Vaches. In January, 1794, the *Elizabeth*, was again attacked by a superior French privateer,"*within five hours' sail of Jamaica, the Elizabeth, Captain Jacob Fletcher, of Liverpool, was attached (sic) by a French privateer of superior force, which she beat off after a smart action, in which the Frenchman had about 30 men killed and wounded. In recognition of his gallant and seamanlike conduct, the underwriters of London presented Captain Fletcher with a piece of plate, of the value, of 100 guineas."*

Caleb Fletcher (junior) (1754 - 1810)

Caleb, the second son of Jacob and Isabella Birch, was 25 aged when he joined his elder brother, for a voyage aboard the *Leviathan* in 1778. The brothers were designated "mariners" on a voyage to New York where the War of Independence was raging.

Fig 4 Jacob Fletcher junior. Courtesy Guy Fletcher

OLD ENGLAND FOR EVER

"Now fitting out to cruise for three Months, and then to proceed to Montego Bay, in Jamaica, where she will be immediately loaden,

The Ship *JAMAICA*,

Caleb Fletcher, Commander,

(Of LIVERPOOL.)

Mounts Eighteen Six-Pounders, with Cohorns, and Swivels; carries 120 Men, is most completely fitted up for their Accommodation, and has a safe Protection.

All brave SEAMEN and LANDMEN, who are willing to Enter, are desired to apply to Capt. FLETCHER (at Mr. JOSEPH FLETCHER's, in Duke-Street, Whitehaven, who will give them the greatest Encouragement.

One Fourth Part of all the PRIZES to be divided among the CREW.

GOD save the KING,

AND

SUCCESS to the *JAMAICA*.

Advert from the Cumberland Chronicle

From 1771 to 1913, Bidston Hill lighthouse on the Wirral, was home to 59 flagpoles, each one belonging to the maritime merchants of Liverpool - the flagpoles belonging to Caleb (junior), dealing in goods from the West Indies, joining Jacob's (senior) flag. Whenever, a ship was spotted rounding the Penisular, whichever owner it belonged to, a flag was raised in anticipation of eagerly emptying the holds of its riches. The flags became a popular subject for ceramic mugs, each one printing the flag and its owner; today, what was once a colourful novelty, has become an abundant source of research for historians.

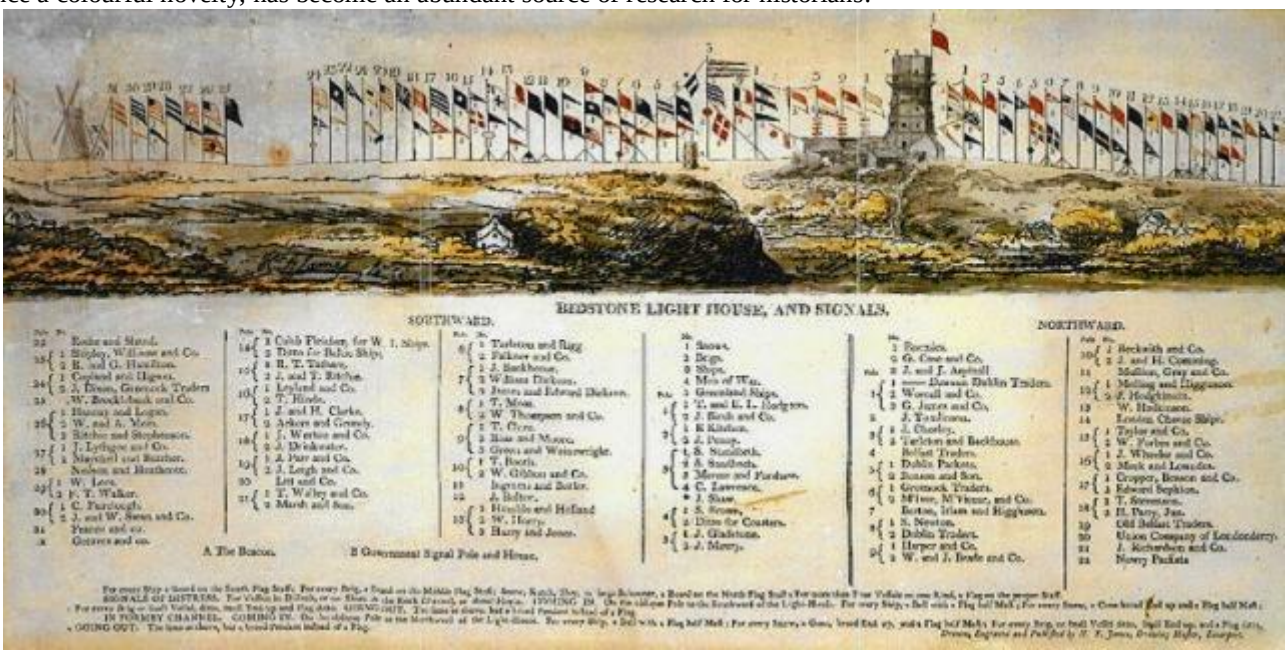


Fig 5 Henry F. James Circa 1807 Courtesy Williamson Art Gallery

In 1850, Richard Watt (1724-1796) was just one of many, making a fortune overseeing his plantations with slave labour in Jamaica, exporting sugar, coffee, indigo, tobacco and ginger. In 1782, Watt moved to Liverpool, purchasing Oak Hill House in Old Swan, and a large estate in Yorkshire in 1795, it was a measure of the wealth Watt had generated over the years by purchasing Speke Hall, for the sum of £73,500.

When Richard Walker (1760- 1801) had completed his education at Oxford, matriculating at the age of 18, he was expected to join the family firm in Liverpool under the tutelage of his uncle, Richard Watt - when his uncle died, the firm was renamed "Watt and Walker." One year after Watt died, Walker and Watt junior commissioned a ship called the *Watt* in honour of their ancestor - with a band playing in front of a vast crowd, the *Watt* sailed off to Jamaica, to continue the prosperity to be found in the plantations.

Fig 6 May Place Wikipedia

In 1786, still only aged 26, Walker with his cousin, Richard Watt junior, bought shares in the ship, *Sarah*, whose captain was Caleb Fletcher, a trinity which brought about handsome profits for all three. Early on their relationship with Walker, Caleb junior had married, in 1788, Ellen Lickbarrow (1766-1821) who were living at Colquitt street, until Walker offered to sell May Place, Broadgreen road, where Caleb and Ellen lived henceforward. (Built in 1760, May Place is today a Care Home). With an office at 51 Hanover street, Joseph and Jacob joined their brother, Caleb, importing sugar, coffee, ginger, rum, coconuts, Madeira wine, and every other thing of value from the West Indies. Having sold May Place, Walker went to live nearby at Oak Hill, where according to his obituary *"his style of living was equal in splendour to many noblemen*."
Walker was fascinated by the exotic plants brought from overseas, and his greenhouses were stocked with their own choice collection, as well being a frequent visitor to William Roscoe's Botanic gardens. Although Roscoe was well known as an abolitionist, the slave-trade was so endemic throughout Liverpool, it was inevitable that Roscoe should have variegated associates, and Walker's appointment as the first President of the Liverpool Botanic Garden was not seen as out of the ordinary.

In 1800, Walker, Watt, Henry Midgely and Caleb bought a ship called *Kenyon.* Captained by Daniel Robinson and sailing to Bonny, Robinson transported 380 Africans to forced labour in Montego Bay, Jamaica, and on the second voyage a further 290 Africans were taken to Martinique. In 1802, the *Kenyon* was headed to Liverpool where she was shipwrecked - but Richard Walker would never have known, having died the previous year, at the early age of 41.

Evidently, Caleb was aware was of his conspicuous ancestry, and was by granted of arms by *The General Armoury, London,3rd of April 1802,* the motto was "*nec quaerere nec spernere honorem*" *"Neither to seek nor to spurn honour."* The escutcheon was used in the main entrance to Allerton to announce a death in the family, today it hangs on the wall of St Nicholas Church, Halewood, donated by the Fletcher family. On the 15th, January, 1810, Caleb the 2nd son of Jacob and Isabella, died in May Place, and was buried in the family vault at Holy Trinity Church, Wavertree.
Fig 7 Escutcheon Author's picture

<u>Caleb and Ellen Fletcher (parents of Jacob, Caleb, William and Elizabeth and two named Thomas who died in infancy) Jacob (1790 – 1863) and Caleb (1792 -1870)</u>
Caleb (junior) had married Ellen Lickbarrow on the 10th of November, 1788, at All Saints Church, Childwall - of their subsequent 6 children, two died after birth, leaving Jacob, born in 1790, Caleb, born in 1792, William, born in 1795, and Elizabeth, born in 1799, who married Henry Ashton of Woolton at All Saints Church.

Fig 8 Family vault at Holy Trinity Church, Wavertree. Authors picture

The brothers John and James Hardman bought Allerton Hall in 1836, and rebuilt it to their own liking, and when James died in 1740, the estate passed to his brother John. When John died in 1755, James's wife, Jane Hardman (1702-1799), who had outlived her children, inherited Allerton. Reputed to be one of the wealthiest women in England, Jane stayed in Allerton until she died in 1799, and the hall was sold to William Roscoe. In the following years, parts of Allerton estates were sold off, with Jacob, aged 21, taking advantage of a large parcel of farming land, soon to be called Fletcher's Farm.

One year after the purchase of Allerton, in 1802, Caleb, Joseph and Jacob formed a partnership, acquiring a ship constructed in 1796 at Whitehaven and registered as *Adelphi* at Liverpool. The *Adelphi* set sail on the 14th of July, captained by Daniel Robinson with a crew of 31, bound for the Bight of Biafra, Gulf of Guinea and Bonny, where they

harvested a total of 333 prospective slaves. The second point of the triangle was the voyage across the Atlantic, reaching Montego Bay, Jamaica, on the 29th of December, where 299 disembarked from the original 333 captured. Departing for home on the 22nd March, 1803, the voyage was completed successfully when they reached Liverpool.
Evidently, the three brothers planned on capitalizing on one final voyage to Africa, before the Abolition Act came into being on

March, 1807, buying the *Tiger* from William Goore. The ship was built in Liverpool as a West Indiaman in 1800, and purchased by Caleb, Jacob and Joseph in 1805, sailed from Liverpool on the 21st of April, 1806, with instructions to make for Bonny, Nigeria, where Captain Charles Kneale's orders were to take on board captured Africans. On the 7th of April, 389 unfortunate souls were landed at Montego Bay, the last sweepings of free Africans for a life bound in servitude in the plantations. Soon afterwards the *Tiger* was sold To Barton and Co.

Fig 9 Allerton soiree

Fletcher's Farmhouse

On the opposite side of Vale road to The Gardener's Arms public house, was a house with no distinguishing features at all except that it was built of sandstone blocks; this was the original Lodge to the Allerton estate, and the Woolton boundary of Jacob's fiefdom. The Lodge was still lived in until circa 1960, when it was demolished. Towards the end of Vale road, opposite Cam street, was another Lodge which was also part of the Allerton estate; disguised by a coating of pebbledash, which hides its original sandstone lustre, it stands opposite the Derby Arms pub belonging to Allerton Tower.

From the The Gardener's Arms Lodge, a path leads up to a gentle slope, where quite unexpectedly, another house is still concealed behind the hedges; surrounded by gardens, a stable block, and courtyards, there is more than a hint of storybook cottages, made more so by an attractive porch with an intriguing lintel above the door; chiselled into the sandstone, the lettering reads **J. H. T 1740**. One transcription has it that the **T** has been worn down and referred to John and James Hardman with **H** for Hardman in the middle, but Jacob Fletcher had a more prosaic interpretation, believing the words stood for a J.H. Tarleton who leased the land in 1740. Surprisingly, many of the Georgian features still exist, from the septic tank to the curious water supply, and it is beyond extraordinary that they are still in use today. The courtyard contains a vast underground cistern, which catches the run-off from the rainwater via a series of pipes, enough to provide water beneath the cellar of the house, and another for the trough to supply the horses. Jacob and Caleb could not resist putting their own stamp on the house – one being the timbers of the *Gulshan*, the first Fletcher ship to trade with China.

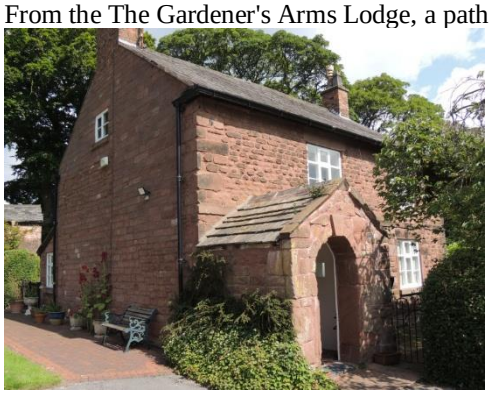


Fig 10 Fletcher's Farm Author's picture

Fig 11 Fletcher's Farm stables. Author's picture

One of the more startling of Jacob's acquisitions was probably a fanciful innovation made by John Hardman; at the end of a row of beech trees he planted, leading to the Black Gates and onward to Allerton Hall, he had created an obelisk. None of the Beeches has survived, but Hardman's curious obelisk can hardly be missed as large sandstone bricks narrow to a needle 50 foot high, which once was crowned by a copper ball, while each of the corners point to the four sides of the compass, and the needle points to the exact five miles to the Town Hall.

Figure 13 Allerton Manor Courtesy Guy Fletcher

Fig 12 The Obelisk Wikipedia

Near to the centre of the estate, Jacob elected to build what would be the pride of his domain; still only in his early twenties, Jacob, employed Thomas Harrison (1744 - 1829), whose reputation as an architect and bridge builder were known throughout the North of England. The unconventional lines of the house bore little resemblance to the intimidating aspect of the stately homes of England, and nearly ready for completion, disaster struck when a fire destroyed part of the building; eventually, the damage was repaired and in 1815, Jacob and Caleb moved into Allerton Manor. The landscaping itself, beyond the house was typical of Georgian mansions – comprising a lawn for games, a circular path for a horse and carriage to turn around, a Ha-Ha to contain the livestock (the sandstone is crumbling but the outlines can still be traced), and the rock features at the side of each path. A stable-yard and coach yard are still standing, alongside a corridor half- buried to retain the vines and vegetables. A walled-in garden was another addition, and as late as the 1980's, there was a rose-garden containing a bronze statue of *Mercury* – both the garden and the statue are no longer to be found.

The inside of the house revealed both Jacob and Caleb to be lovers of sporting events, and cultured to the point of collecting works by Rembrandt and Titian. In complete contrast, the brothers managed The Harriers of the Liverpool Hunt, and paintings of the St. Leger winners of 1823 and 1825, *Barefoot* and *Memnon*, hung on the walls. In 1846, Jacob wrote a memoir which began "*I have a fancy to write some account of myself, for my own amusement"* finishing the sentence with a sentiment most of us would recognize "*I wish that one had listened with more patience to the family histories of those who preceded us."* Too large to be copied here, the narrative through a child's eyes, is full of Jacob's family members with all their idiosyncracies laid bare, along with descriptions of Liverpool buildings and landscapes, as they appeared then - *"We lived in Colquitt street, which was in itself in the country."*

William (1795 –1871) and Mary Benson (1804 – 1892)

Both brothers never married, with Jacob dying on the18th of June, 1863, and Caleb on the 18th of November, 1870, and both interred within the family churchyard at Holy Trinity, Wavertree – whereupon the estate was inherited by the 3rd son of Ellen Lickbarrow, William Fletcher, who was born May Place, in 1795. and went on to marry Mary, the grand-daughter of Moses Benson (1738 – 1806) - Mary Benson was born on the 10th of January, 1804, in Lutwyche Hall, Shropshire, owned by her grandfather. The marriage took place in August, 1826, at All Saints Church, Childwall, and the couple lived at Allerton.

Fig 14 The Mansion of Moses Benson, Liverpool archives

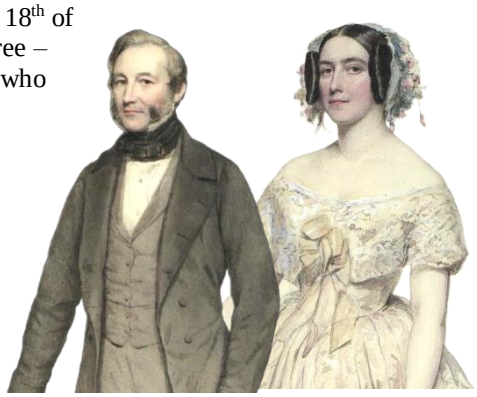


Fig 15 William and Mary Courtesy of Guy Fletcher

Mary's grandfather had entered the West India trade in his twenties; having acquired a fortune in Jamaica, Benson returned to Liverpool in 1775, building a palatial mansion in Duke street, taking in Kent street, Cornwallis street and St. James's street. There was no shortage of poverty-stricken children hanging round the docks, and Benson built a school in St. James street which lasted until well after his death – like so many works of charity, carried out by the great and the good of the town, Benson's benevolence was tempered by the proceeds of the slave-trade.
When Benson had returned to Liverpool, he brought with him his four children and their mother, Judith Powell. Judith, was known in Jamaica as a "free mustee" being of black ancestry, which is probably why they never married.
William became an Agent for the Bank of England, and over the years, Mary gave birth to 4 sons and 3 daughters. When Caleb passed away in 1870, William, was to enjoy his inheritance for only a year, when he died aged 75.

The 4 Sons and 3 Daughters of William Fletcher and Mary Benson (William, Henry, Edward, Alfred, Mary, Emily1, Emily2)

The wildly varying fortunes of William and Mary's children must have caused them a great deal of pride, mingled with sadness, as the 3 of the 4 sons died all too soon:

William (1827 - 1869**)** As a Major in the 44th Regiment of Foot, William landed at Varna in the summer of 1854, and in September took part in the battles of the Alma, Inkerman in November of the same year, and the siege of Sebastopol throughout the following harsh winter, where the Regiment finally took the Brotherhood cemetery. It must have been a shock for William and Mary's first-

born child to have gone through the worrisome times scrutinizing *The London Illustrated Times*, and their disquieting engravings of the Crimean War, for William to have died on the 9th of December, 1869, at age of 42, in Douglas, Isle of Man March 1st, 1854, with 480 people.

Henry (1834 – 1854) The Inman Line *S.S. City of Glasgow* left Liverpool on March 1st, 1854, with 480 people on board. Sailing to Philadephia, Henry was travelling in a cabin at 21 Guineas a berth (dogs at 3 Guineas). In an uncanny fate which presaged the sinking of the *Titanic*, large icebergs were seen in that same vicinity, and at the end of March, she was accepted, along with crew and passengers, as lost.

Edward (1834 – 1853) Died at the age of 15, and was interred in Holy Trinity Church, Wavertree.

Alfred (1841 – 1919

Fig 16 Alfred Fletcher Courtesy Guy Fletcher

Born in 1841, in Parkside, Alfred was the youngest of William and Mary's children; aged 20, he joined the army, with a commission in the 4th Lancashire Artillery Volunteer Corps,1865, after a swift series of promotions, Alfred commanded the 3rd Battery as Major.

After completing his education at Winchester, Alfred's star was in its ascendancy when he became a Justice of the Peace (1874), the Director of the London and North-Western Railway, including 2 other railway companies, and a Director of the Liverpool and London Globe Insurance Company. In June,1868, Alfred married Edith Littledale (1848 - 1920) when Edith was aged 20 and Alfred 27. Edith was born at Highfield House, a magnificent estate built in 1750, and demolished in 1915, when Highfield School Secondary Modern for Boys was built in its place. Edith had inherited a house called Hollybank, Green lane, Mossley Hill, where their eldest son, William Alfred Littledale Fletcher was born, followed by their daughter, Edith Mabel Fletcher. When Alfred's father, William died, Mary went to live in Clearwood Lodge, Mossley Hill (the house is still standing) and it was in 1871, that Alfred and his family moved into Allerton Manor. Mary lived in Clearwood Lodge for the next 20 years, meeting her death on the 27th December, 1892, when she was buried in Holy Trinity, Wavertree.

Fig 17 Edith Littledale Courtesy Guy Fletcher

Fig 18 Mary Fletcher Bright and Tyndall Bright Gibbs family

Mary Fletcher Bright (1828-1822) Mary lived into her 90's, marrying Tyndall Bright (1824 – 1902) in 1851, at St George's church; first living at no 8 Sunnyside in Princes Park, later moving to Woodcote, Aigburth road. Mary's two girls **Caroline** (1852 – 1941) and **Emily Isabel Bright** (1856 – 1932) lived to the ages of 88 and 76, but true the tragedies that beset the Fletcher/Bright family, all three of the boys met untimely deaths.

William Richard Bright died in 1858 at the age of 3, while **Robert (Robin) Bright** (1853-1875), educated at Eton, died en route for Australia, aboard the *S.S. Great Britain* on the 5th of October, the day before his 23rd birthday - typhoid fever had broken out aboard ship.

Fig 19 William Richard Bright Gibbs family

Arthur Tyndall Bright (1857 – 1879 *"Arthur was bright, handsome and stood over 6ft tall. He played Rugby, the school's top polo player, Captain of Rowing and had a beautiful tenor voice with his favourite song called Nancy Lee"*- from a recommendation by a tutor from Arthur Bright's school, Eton. When Arthur entered the army on the 6th of November, 1846, aged 19, it was not long before he was posted to South Africa, joining Lord Chelmsford's redressing for the humiliation of Isandlwana on the 22st of January. Arthur was ordered to one of the 3 columns, under Colonel Evelyn Wood, in a laagered camp, on a hill named Khambula with a force of 2,000 men. Ordered to be a part of a counter-attack, Arthur joined with bayonets fixed, and drove the Zulu impi's back– but hidden in the brush, a number of Zulu, opened fire with guns stolen from the dead at Isandlwana; one of Arthur's men was blinded, and another was shot dead, with Arthur shot in both legs, and bled to death. Despite a memorial plaque being placed on the newly-built Church of St. Matthew and St. James, at the top of Mossley Hill, it did not disguise that both Mary (Fletcher) Bright and her mother, both had undergone the loss of their sons in remarkably similar circumstances.

Fig 20 Memorial to Arthur Tyndall Bright photo by Kathryn Topping

Fig 21 Arthur Tyndall Bright Gibbs family

Emily 1 Born the 1st June, 1830, died 23 May, 1831. Interred in Holy Trinity, Wavertree.

Emily 2 (1832 – 1905) At dusk when the sun goes down, the Ruabon brickwork of St. Dunstan's Church glows amidst its haphazard surroundings, and stands as a silent exemplar of Victorian architecture; within the church there are memorials to the powerful Earle clan and the church itself was left as a monument to the family.

When Sir Hardman Earle (1792 – 1877) viewed with alarm the creeping housing which threatened to engulf his estate of Spekelands, (Earle road), he acted with his customary initiative, and in the 1840's, bought Allerton Tower. By 1849, Allerton Tower was completed, with its unusual Lodge, an Orangery, a Laburnum walk and gardens – all now slowly decaying. Sir Hardman Earle had 6 daughters (one died in infancy) and 4 sons – Major General William Earle (1834 –1885) died fighting within the relief force, in the vain attempt to rescue General Gordon from Khartoum; his statue with his sword held aloft is on a plateau outside St. George's Hall. With the Earle's a new neighbour, it would have been unusual for the Fletcher family not to have visited, and one of these meetings led to marriage between another son, Sir Thomas Earle (1820 – 1900) and Emily Fletcher (1832 – 1905). Emily went on to have an astonishing 14 children - with 4 of girls dying in infancy. Thomas and Emily lie side by side, among the Hardman family headstones in St. Peter's Church, Woolton; among the tangled ivy and blackberry bushes, with a bird's nest sheltering within the Cross, you would have to scrape off the roots obscuring the wording which then reveals the name William Sewell, his wife and two of his children.

Fig 22 Major General Sir William Earle Author's photo

Sewell took part in the now legendary Charge of the Light Brigade, returning home with a metal plate in his head, to become Sir Hardman Earle's coachman.

Cecil Rhodes once said imperiously *"You are an Englishman, and have subsequently drawn the greatest prize in the lottery of life."* Many an "*Englishmen*" living in deprivation could take issue with Rhodes, but it was typical of Victorian hubris to exclude women entirely from any such discourse; in Victorian times, there was no escaping the true "*lottery in life*" - the shocking amount of child mortality which runs through this narrative.

The 6 boys and 1 girl of Alfred and Edith Littledale Fletcher

Apart from William and Edith, all of the rest of Alfred's children were born in Allerton Manor, and baptised in All Hallow's Church; however, there was lamentable beginning for the family, when Aubrey Littledale Fletcher died at 7 weeks old. To the great relief of Alfred and Edith, the 5 boys and one girl which followed proved healthy,

Dorothy Noël Fletcher It is not difficult to deduce that Dorothy was born on Christmas Day, 1880; her marriage in 1908 to John Douglas Greenshields was followed by a reception at Allerton Manor where 500 guests were invited. A newspaper report gave a dazzling account of the richness of the surroundings, from the priceless art works, collections of China, and the heads of rare animals displayed.

Fig 23 Harold Molyneux Fletcher Courtesy Guy Fletcher

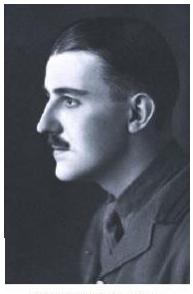
Fernand Coffey - Not less in nobility and character than "Fardy" Coffey – a popular and highly esteemed resident and jannock in his every fibre. He was in the service of the Fletcher family for many years as one of 4 gardeners, and was keenly interested in the "Old Sick Club" and St Mary's Young Men's Society. He joined The Volunteer movement, and the Artillery Section, Garston Battery- He was reckoned as one their "crack" shots. from a contemporary account

Harold Molyneux Fletcher (1889 – 1944)

All of the men joined the army, Harold becoming a Captain in the Lancashire Hussars. He went to live in Hampshire with his wife and daughter.

Bolton Littledale Fletcher (1886 **–** 1943***)***

Bolton, joined the Scot's Guards at the beginning of the First World War. Along with 1600 of his fellows, he was interned in Holland from October 1914, after the fall of Antwerp.



HAROLD MOLYNEUX FLETCHER

Fig 24 Bolton Littledale Fletcher Courtesy Guy Fletcher

Edward Lionel Fletcher (1876 -1968) Edward represented the school at Bisley; in 1894, gazetted Second Lieutenant in the Volunteer Battalion, King's Liverpool Regiment. An apprenticeship with Ismay, Imire and Co, led to later becoming Assistant Manager, White Star Line and in 1912 became Chairman of the Liverpool Steam Ship Owners Association. Always a superb shot, Lionel was chosen consistently for all manner of Rifle Matches, and on 8 occasions, represented England in International Matches. After 20 years' service, with permission to retain the rank of Captain and to wear the prescribed uniform. Lionel's travels took him to Canada, Africa, Zanzibar, India, Burmah, New Zealand, Norway, The Phillipines, China, Australia, Ceylon and the United States of America; shooting big game whenever the opportunity arose. He first married in 1903, to Mary Bates, finding time in his crowded

Figure 26 Geoffrey Littledale Fletcher Courtesy Guy Fletcher

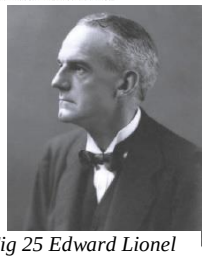


Fig 25 Edward Lionel Fletcher Courtesy Guy Fletcher

hours, to have 2 daughters and a son, and married again in 1936, with no further issue. Despite these foregoing claims to fame, Lionel's associates delighted in telling and retelling again, the days when he dented the copper ball above the Obelisk, and pointed out the shots which chipped the sandstone can be today.

Geoffrey Littledale Fletcher (1879 – 1945**)** At the age of 21, Geoffrey joined as a Lieutenant Colonel in The King's Liverpool Regiment and volunteered for the Boer War, just in time for its beginning on 11th October, 1899. Geoffrey served until the end of May, 1902, when the Boer's were finally forced to give way.
Geoffrey, still only 26, married Lilian Steuart Gladstone (1878 – 1960) on the 27th of September 1905, within the Church of All Hallows, and went on to become J.P. for the county of Denbigh. The marriage was blessed with one son, Alfred William Fletcher (1879 – 1945) and Audrey Littledale Fletcher (1910 – 1999).
Geoffrey died in Glan Aber, Abergele, Clywd, North Wales.

William Alfred Littledale Fletcher (W.A.L.F) (1869 – 1919**)**
The Oarsman

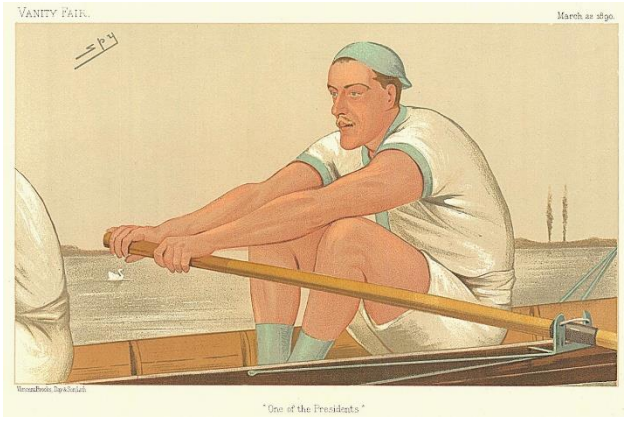


Fig 27 William Alfred Littledale Fletcher Vanity Fair

Just as the sons of Alfred and Edith joined the army, each one was educated at Eton which boasted Prime Ministers, world leaders, Nobel laureates, and award-winning actors, as former pupils; with generations of the aristocracy having been referred to as "the nurse of England's statesmen." In spite of the fact many pupils were destined to become administrators of the Empire – none were exempt – at the time the Fletcher sons attended Eton, "fagging" and "flogging days" were habitual; then and now Eton, provides a means to Oxford. All the sons of Edith and Alfred were 6 ft in height, with W.A.L.F. reaching 6ft 3 inches; by the time he went up to Oxford aged 19, he had increased in muscularity and his rowing skills increased accordingly – earning the nickname Flea for his athleticism. The medals, victories and achievements attained by W.A.L.F. are far too many to detail here, suffice it to say, that his expertise in his chosen sport, reached legendary proportions, and in the march edition of Vanity Fair, 1893, ran a profile of the great oarsman in Men of the Day. Described as a "*capital shot, a staunch friend, and a really good fellow, full of British pluck."*
It would not be too long before that "British pluck" would be tested to the limit.

The Traveller Clement St. George Royds Littledale (1851 – 1931) was born in Highfield House- his elder sister Edith Littledale married Alfred Fletcher and went to live in Allerton Manor, forming a social and business association between the two great houses. Clement's unusual name came about when Queen Victoria and Albert visited St. George's Hall in the same year of 1851, as his birth – but he was always called St. George. When St. George's father, Thomas Littledale, died in 1861, his mother, Julia Royds, remarried, and aged 21, St. George came into his inheritance – and promptly set off on a trip around the world. St. George lived a world, where on the Great Plains, it was quite commendable for buffalo to be driven to the edge of extinction, where Elk, Bear, Wolves, Cougar and many other species were shot for recreation; so, for a rich Englishman, bearing the best that London gunsmiths could buy, and additionally, an outstanding marksman, would be a source of admiration. In time, St. George modified his views about hunting, but for the time being spent two months hunting in Colorado, before his yearning for distant lands came over him again. From Cuba, Canada and the West Indies, St, George's wanderings led him to San Francisco and the boat to Yokohama, where in an unexpected turn of events, he met Mr and Mrs Scott – two world travellers after his own bent. Together they visited China, Rangoon, Calcutta and Kashmir, when William John Scott (1827 – 1875) began to deteriorate at an alarming rate – diagnosed with

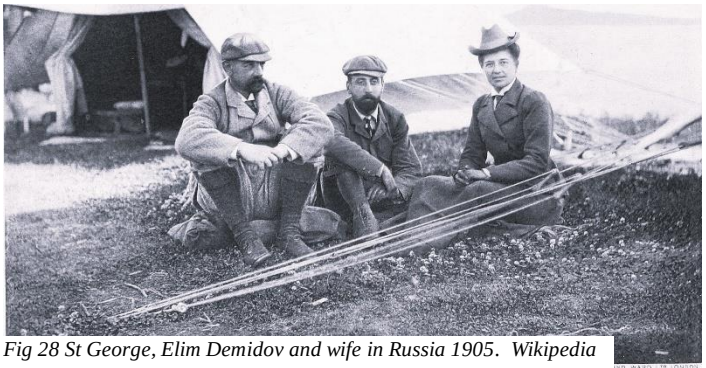


Fig 28 St George, Elim Demidov and wife in Russia 1905. Wikipedia

typhoid fever, Scott died on the 16th of June, 1875. St. George took charge of everything, returning to Highfield House, with the grieving widow and the coffin. As time went by, the pair grew closer, drawn by their mutual passion for travel, and on the 27th of February, 1877, they married - St. George at 25 and Teresa, aged 38. In the following years, they travelled to regions so unconventional, that even today they would be found with difficulty on any map, and 17 years later, they decided to revisit Tibet – with St. George aged 42 and Teresa aged 55.

Given that the trip would be challenging, they decided to invite another of the Littledale clan, and the 25 year old W.A.L.F accepted without hesitation. So, St George, Teresa, "Willie," and Tanny, their pet dog set off on the 10th of November, 1894, meeting prearranged guides on the way. The Littledale adventure alone would fill many pages, and the following account is abbreviated to say the least; after an epic journey through snow and ice, mountainous peaks, packs of wolves, a pitiless, howling wind, incompetent guides, frostbite and dysentery which almost killed Teresa, the Littledale adventure was to end in a frustrating 40 miles from The Forbidden City, Lhasa - forbidden to see the Dalai Lama and in fear for their lives. The Tibetans had good reason to be cautious about strangers, for even then China had designs upon Tibet, and in 1950, their nightmare became reality when China annexed the land known as "the roof of world," killing 1 million Tibetans and the Dalai Lama forced into exile.
By August, 1895, they began the journey home – the Littledale's to carry on their tour of the globe, and Willie to begin an adventure of another kind.

Geoffrey was always by the side of his elder brother and like him had a strict code of duty, and at the age of 22 he joined William In South Africa, serving with distinction.

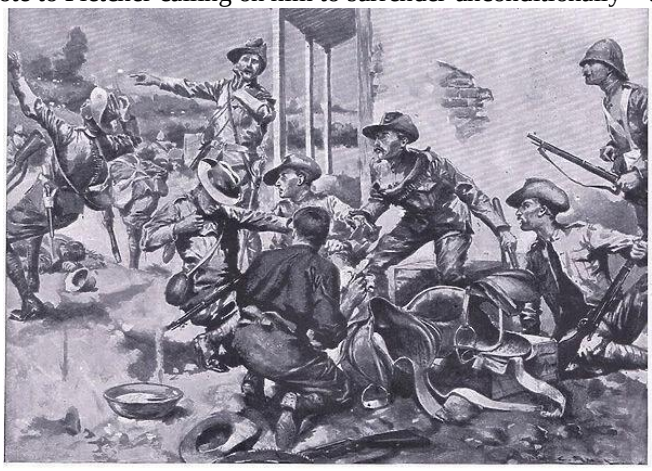
The Boer War (October 1899 – May 1902)

When war was declared between the Boers and the British Empire in October, 1899, two days later, the Boers surrounded the small garrison township of Mafeking. Colonel Robert Baden-Powell was the British Commander, and the newspapers in Britain began to publish every episode in the on-going siege, where "gallant British troops" told of the British resolve against the Boer's shelling the township in an effort to starve them out. After seven long months, a flying column broke through the Boer troops, and Mafeking was saved; throughout Britain, there were widespread celebrations, while in London, hysterical crowds danced and cheered the night away.
However, the sieges of Kimberley and Ladysmith had very different outcomes, with efforts to relieve them led to three defeats in which the newspapers deemed Black Week. The worst of the British losses were at a hill called Spion Kop where the British troops advanced as in Wellington's famous quote – "*They came on in the same old way, and we sent them back in the same old way*."

Fig 29 William Alfred Littledale Fletcher Courtesy Guy Fletcher

Unfortunately, what succeeded at Waterloo, met with disaster in South Africa, as the sharpshooting Boers fired from the heights at their leisure while the British scrambled upon the rocky ground – Spion Kop (hill of spies) has been commemorated at most notably at Anfield Football Ground where returning soldiers were reminded of the gravel heights of that fateful hill.

This was the arena would enter, when William Alfred Littledale Fletcher joined the Lancashire Hussars at the beginning of hostilities in 1899, followed by his brother Geoffrey Littledale Fletcher aged 20. On the 17th of December, William Fletcher was in command of 30 men, protecting a ration depot, at a remote farmhouse called Hamelfontein. Pickets reported that at 10.30 a.m. that a force of Boers were approaching numbering 250 men, and the men were driven back to the farmhouse, quickly placing barricades as best as they could. The officer in command of the Boer commando sent a formal note to Fletcher calling on him to surrender unconditionally – the terse reply was as follows – *"I have been put in charge here and will remain in charge until I receive orders to give up the house. W.A.L. Fletcher."* Despite threats to bring cannon to destroy the farmhouse, and sporadic shooting from both sides, Fletcher decided to send for reinforcements; a19 year old trooper named Stevenson was chosen, but was quickly taken by the Boers wherein he ate the note given to him, and to his great relief released to make his own way back.
After a weary eleven - and – half hours the Boers made overtures to take in two of their wounded, and in the early morning they left, leaving two British dead; Lancashire Hussar, Samuel Swann of Earlestown, shot on sentry duty. And Lieutenant Wilfrid Moss Johnson, 2nd Lancashire Volunteer Artillery, aged 22 of Woolton – born in 1888, he was buried in St. Peters Church, Woolton, aged 22.



When the Boer war ended in 1902, Fletcher and his brother, Geoffrey were each awarded the Queen's South Africa Medal, with William's investiture of the Distinguished Service Order was made by King Edward VII at St. James' Palace. William was twice Mentioned in Despatches for gallantry - on one occasion by Lord Kitchener and another by Lord Roberts.

Fig 30 The Siege at Hamelfontein Wikipedia

In 1908, Edith and Alfred donated the clock tower at All Hallows Church with the following plaque;

THE CLOCK IN THIS CHURCH TOWER IS GIVEN BY EDITH / WIFE OF ALFRED FLETCHER OF ALLERTON ESQUIRE J.P., D.L. / AS A THANK-OFFERING FOR MERCY RECEIVED IN THE SAFE / RETURN OF TWO SONS FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR / EASTER 1908.

The First World War

Following their adventures in South Africa, William returned to his first love, coaching and enhancing his already fame within rowing circles. Between 1902 and 1914, William travelled extensively throughout Kenya, Siberia, China, Japan and India – hunting exotic animals whose trophies adorned the walls of Allerton Manor.

This carefree life would have both suited both William and Geoffrey, but the dark shadow of war was just beginning when war with Germany was declared on the 4th of August,1914, and all 5 brothers would be involved. One month later, the 2/6th Rifle Battalion, the Kings Liverpool Regiment was formed, with Lt.-Col. G.A.Wilson as Commanding Officer, soon to be joined by officers who had served in the Boer War, including Captain W.A.L. Fletcher, now aged 45, and G.L. Fletcher, aged 35. To their great disappointment, both men spent the first 2 years of the war training volunteers, passing on their invaluable experience of war, and no doubt saving many lives in the process. However, on the 14th of February, 1917, following a good luck message from the King, the 2/16th sailed aboard *S.S.Victoria*, finally reaching the village of Fleurbaix, on the front lines. After 3 years and 6 months of warfare, the landscape had been reduced to a wilderness of mud, barbed wire, and shell-holes full of brackish, green rainwater; while the war-weary soldiers were infested with rats, fleas and lice. With the German lines no more than 400 yards away it was inevitable that Fletcher's men suffered their first casualties, while moving from sector to sector, the battalion reached Armentières, where fighting had taken place from the very start of the war.

Fig 31 "Gassed" Painting by John Singer Sargent 1919 Artuk.uk

On the 20th of May, Fletcher was due his first leave, telegraphing ahead to Allerton that he was "*catching the midnight train, Monday*." Fletcher's leave was to be all too short, and on the 31st of May, he was back in command of the 2/6th with its incessant patrols, and raids and mud-filled trenches. By July, fighting again in Armentières, if the battalion thought they had seen all the enemy had to offer in their never-ending combat, they entered into a new nightmare - a toxic brand of gas devised by German chemists.The Chlorine gas previously used was bad enough, and the gas masks supplied were at least some protection from its noxious fumes, but the Mustard gas was loathsome beyond words; with its properties unknown, there was no protection available, and with a multitude of horrors which damaged the respiratory system, damage to the eyes, nausea, vomiting, diarrheoa, blindness, and chemical burns, there was no ending to the damage it inflicted. Casualties of the battalion were 445 due to this, as yet, unknown nemesis, with Major Wilson and Fletcher admitted to *Le Touquet* hospital in August with gas poisoning – although Fletcher made light of his injuries, mainly to relieve the worries of his family, it was more than a month before he was fit again to resume his duties. From September until the following May, with hardly any rest days, Fletcher took part in combat on the front lines, until his sense of duty finally caught up him. Transferred to an Officer's Rest Station; the few days in the Rest Station was not deemed enough rest for Fletcher, and on the 5th of June he was sent on 14 day's leave, returning to action on the 25th of June where he was immediately injured by a German shell.

Fig 32 Geoffrey Littledale Fletcher. Author's picture

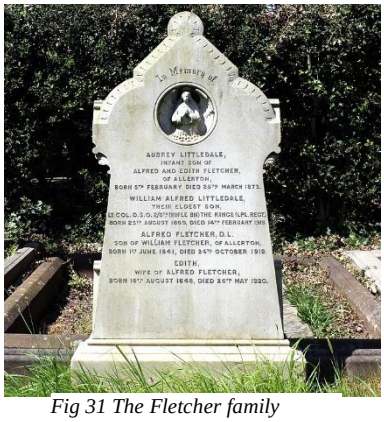


Fig 31 The Fletcher family

On the 23rd of July, Fletcher reluctantly resigned command of the battalion at his own request, having twice been mentioned in dispatches, earned a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour by the French Government, and left with the honorary rank of Lt-Colonel.

When the war ended on Armistice Day, on the 11th day of the 11th month, 1918, all of the 5 sons of Alfred and Edith had come through the carnage of that meaningless war; Bolton had served as a Major in the Scots Guards; Harold as a Captain in the Lancashire Hussars; Lionel was Lt-Col in the Royal Marines, been seconded to the Ministry of Shipping, knighted in 1915, and was in charge of the troops headed for France on the White Star Line; while Geoffrey had commanded battalions in the King's regiment, Liverpool. While W.A.L. to all intents and purposes, was recovering well from his breakdown, the insidious effects of the Mustard Gas had yet to take its toll. Returning to his old passion for rowing, and making plans to travel to Africa once again, W.A.L's schemes came to an abrupt end when he contracted "Spanish Flu" and died at Allerton on the 14th of February,1919.
The tributes came from all quarters, as the great man was interred in St. Nicholas Church, Halewood; it was a cruel blow to Alfred and Edith, after celebrating all their sons' surviving the war, only for a belated gas attack to lay the eldest low.

Fig 33 80 years after the terrible fire, the remnants of Allerton are still standing. Author's picture.

The End Of the Line

Alfred was aged 78, when he died in October, 1919, followed by Edith in May, 1920, signalling 100 years of the Fletcher Family's ownership, when death duties saw great houses across Britain falling like dominoes, and Allerton estate was sold to the Corporation of Liverpool in 1921, for a sum of £40,000. In 1923, a 9-hole and an 18 hole municipal golf course was opened; Liverpool City Council was bold to the point of foolhardiness in those days and it has to said that golf in those times was hardly a working man's game, and the ownership of a set of clubs was beyond the incomes of most - nevertheless, the golf course proved a handsome asset over the years. The mansion was converted into a club-house with the largest room serving refreshments called the Fletcher Room, and in another part of the building offices were set aside for Parks and Gardens officials. The first Golf Professional, a was Mr Gregg, resided in the mansion house itself, retaining the post from 1923 until 1940, when William Large took over.

In 1905, the Council had made the bold decision to construct Menlove avenue, and by 1924, the handsome new boulevard had taken the place of Folly Vale road, parallel with Vale road and joining up with Hillfoot road. However, this proposal necessitated cutting off a tranche of Fletcher's Farm including the old Lodge, which required no negotiation, as the land had already been transferred to the Council; and Menlove avenue was completed. By the 1930's, the attractive semi-detached houses were also completed – bordering the roadside, very few envisioned the amount of traffic to be seen today - and by the Second World War, nobody thought of Woolton as a target for German bombers. However, the Luftwaffe had done their reconnaissance thoroughly, and for many years there were several gaps in the rows of terraced houses on the corner of Cobden street where errant bombs had landed, bound for the factory off Cam street where the workforce were making parachutes – the factory later became Bear Brand which later made silk stockings.

Many of the city municipal departments were moved into Allerton during the war years, with a section of the military manning a battery near to the golf course. It was therefore ironic that having escaped disaster throughout the war, on the night of the 20th of November, 1944, at 10 p.m. the golf professional's wife, Mrs Large, smelled smoke in the upstairs Committee rooms. William Large and his two sons went to investigate and found a fire blazing away. While Mrs Large alerted the Fire Brigade, the three men tackled the blaze with buckets of water. When the firemen arrived, they found the fire spreading rapidly but to their distress the only water to be found was from emergency tanks – frantically, the firemen searched nearby at the Forty Pits and great lengths of hosepipe were even carried to Calderstone's Park lake. The firemen anxiously awaiting the hosepipes formed a chain, and aided by the Large family, salvaged 200 sets of private golf clubs, mounted heads from the Fletcher trophy room and several valuable paintings on loan from the Walker Art Gallery – the following morning the City Treasury records were found intact in the vaulted cellars. Shortly after midnight, the first storey collapsed in a great mass of smoke and sparks, and despite the valiant efforts of the firemen who had at last found a source of water, by 2 a.m. the greater part of the building was beyond redemption.

A New Start

The stone pillars which formed the basis of the ground floor were still intact, and given an ounce of determination and aspiration, rebuilding the historic building was always achievable, but there were always other things to take precedence in the city coffers. And in 2025, after 81 years, apart from tree saplings, slowly splitting the roofing masonry, things have remained the same way. The Leisure Company called Green Circle who took over the management of Allerton Manor in 2005; with a reputation for shrewd judgment within landscaping of green spaces and golf courses, with team of experts in their field, and backed by highly respected businessmen, Allerton Manor is already altered beyond recognition. The Old Stables have become a restaurant, wedding functions are popular, part of the mansion has reopened with a Sports Bar adjoining, and best of all, plans have been submitted for the restoration of the mansion.

The Golf Course has of course been the crowning glory of Allerton Manor, and while it has maintained a high standard since 1925, in the 100 years between, the course is basically the same as it was when first constructed. For the last two years, the course has been in the process of being renovated, with a steady team of lorries delivering soil, and JCB's making a single extended 18-hole course. There is a lake already created and overall the construction has been mighty impressive, with Green Circle establishing not just a golf course but a whole new dynasty for Allerton Manor.

Fig 36 Part of Allerton restored. Green Circle

Most of the information for this article came from William Guy Fletcher, who was most generous with helping me to unravel his fascinating ancestry. There are whole passages and chapters which I have reluctantly omitted; however, if you delve into the book called, written by William Guy Fletcher, "6 centuries of the family's history" will unfold, filling in the parts I have been forced to leave out.
Geoffrey Littledale Fletcher married Lilian Steuart Gladstone in 1905 at All Hallows Church – their son Alfred William Fletcher was born at Allerton Manor in 1909, with their daughter, Audrey Littledale Fletcher, born in the 30th of January,1909. Alfred later married Olive Daphne Gardiner in 1940, producing a daughter, Joseene Fletcher in 1942, and William Guy Fletcher born in 1944, the author of "Fletchers of Allerton Manor."

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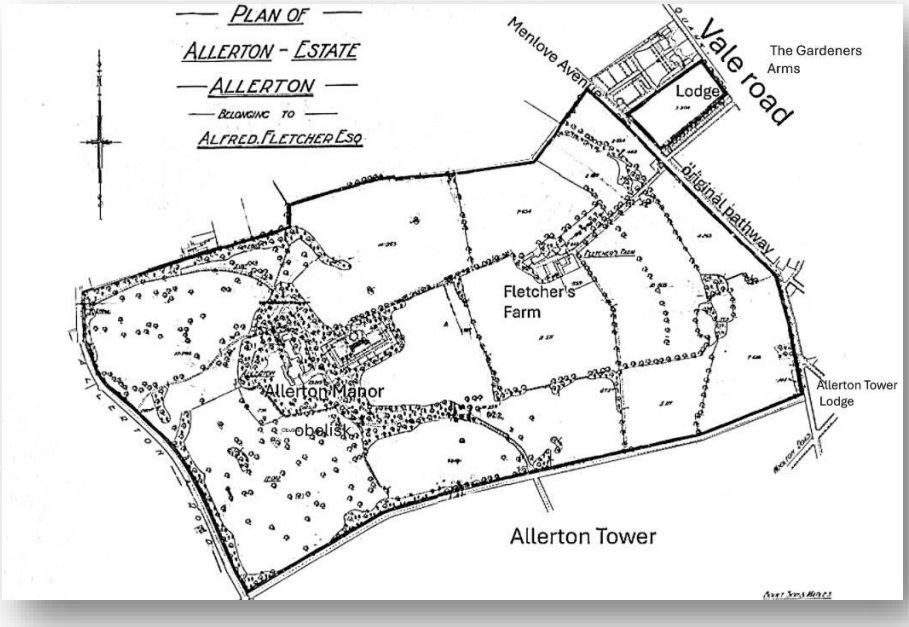

JOHN HUSSEY

2025